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OCI No. 1288/74

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
Directorate of Intelligence  
June 1, 1974

## INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Jordan's King Husayn  
Since the Zarga Mutiny

King Husayn has endured the hostility of his neighbors, insurrectionary plots, countless assassination attempts, and outright warfare between his Palestinian and Bedouin subjects. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] The future course of Jordanian affairs depends very heavily on what Husayn does or does not do, on who has his confidence and who does not, and, ultimately, on how he feels about himself and his country. Husayn's handling of the Zarga mutiny may be a gauge of his present temperament and of his behavior during the critical period ahead.

The Mutiny

In early February elements of the Jordanian army's elite 40th armored brigade mutinied while King Husayn was out of the country. Although the unrest was largely contained to the garrison town of Zarga just north of Amman, the rebellious troops won widespread sympathy among the lower ranks of the army as well as the civilian population by demanding an immediate military pay raise, a general rollback in consumer prices, and the dismissal of two of the King's closest advisers, Prime Minister Zaid Rifai and Army Chief of Staff Sharif Zaid bin Shakir. [REDACTED]

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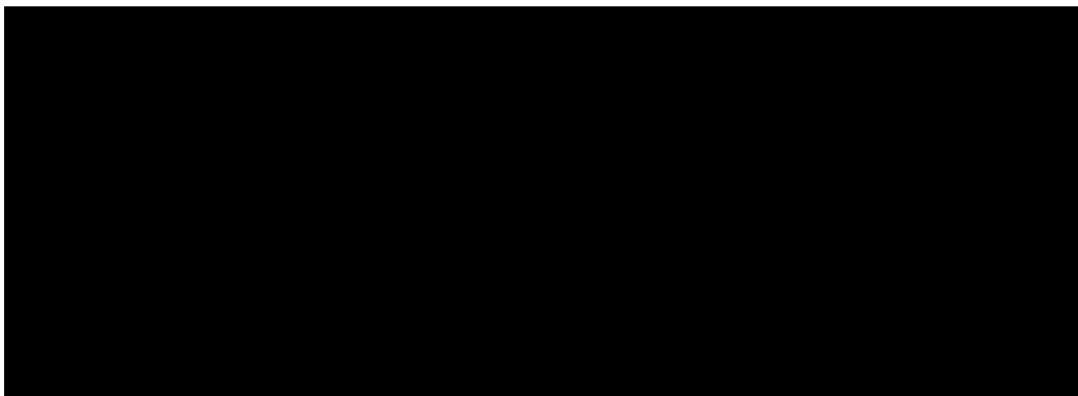
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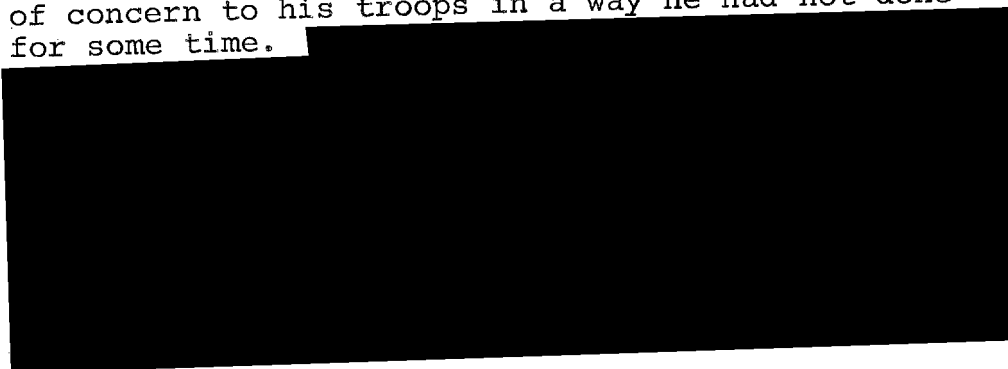
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The mutiny never became a direct threat to Husayn and quickly subsided once the King intervened personally to ease the soldiers' economic plight. Nevertheless, his inattention to a number of long standing grievances among enlisted men and junior officers contributed significantly to the unrest.



The Zarga disorders at least momentarily jolted Husayn into action, forcing him to deal with matters of concern to his troops in a way he had not done for some time.



#### Troubled King

Looking outward a year ago, King Husayn seemed to see two of Jordan's most important tasks as repairing relations with Egypt and Syria and persuading Kuwait to resume its much-needed subsidy payments, which were suspended during the 1970-71 conflict with the fedayeen. His patience and persistence finally paid off when Cairo and Damascus agreed to re-establish diplomatic relations with Jordan shortly before the war last October. After the King sent two armored brigades to Syria during the fighting, Kuwait relented as well and resumed and even increased its annual financial assistance from \$40 to 55 million.

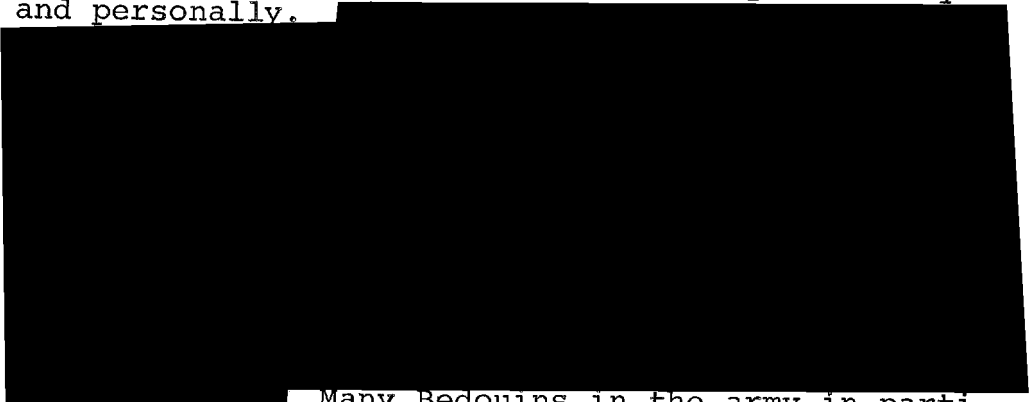
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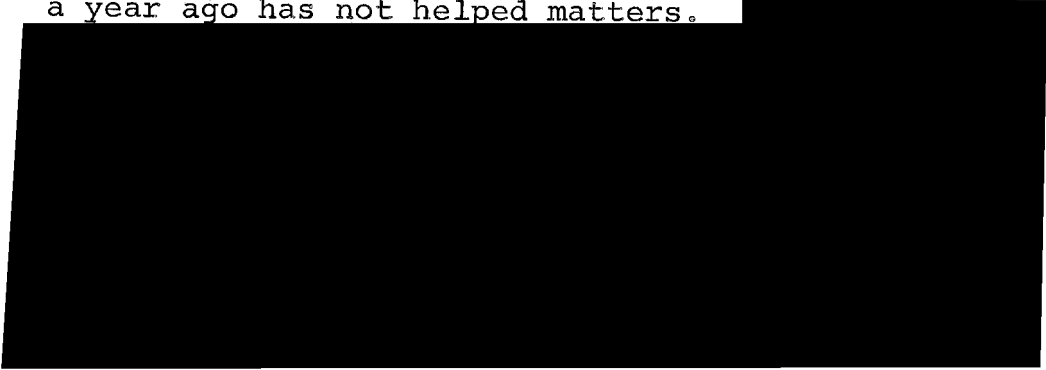
Despite these successes, the last year has been a difficult one for Husayn, both politically and personally.



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Many Bedouins in the army in particular were unhappy about the amnesty and feared for a time that the King, in his efforts to woo Sadat and Asad, might permit the fedayeen to return to Jordan in force.

The selection of his close confidant and long-time personal friend Zaid Rifai to be prime minister a year ago has not helped matters.



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Husayn's efforts, moreover, to pursue his claims to the Israeli-occupied West Bank initially encountered resistance from many East Bankers (including Hassan) as well as other Arab leaders. The King reacted bitterly to the decision of the Arab summit conference last November to designate the Palestine Liberation Organization as the "sole representative of the Palestinian people," in effect disregarding Jordan's own claims to the Palestinian-populated West Bank. He has found his dealings with Sadat since the October war especially frustrating. The Egyptian president has held him at arm's length most of the time, while maneuvering to persuade the fedayeen to participate in the peace negotiations. Sensing that US support for his claims to the West Bank is

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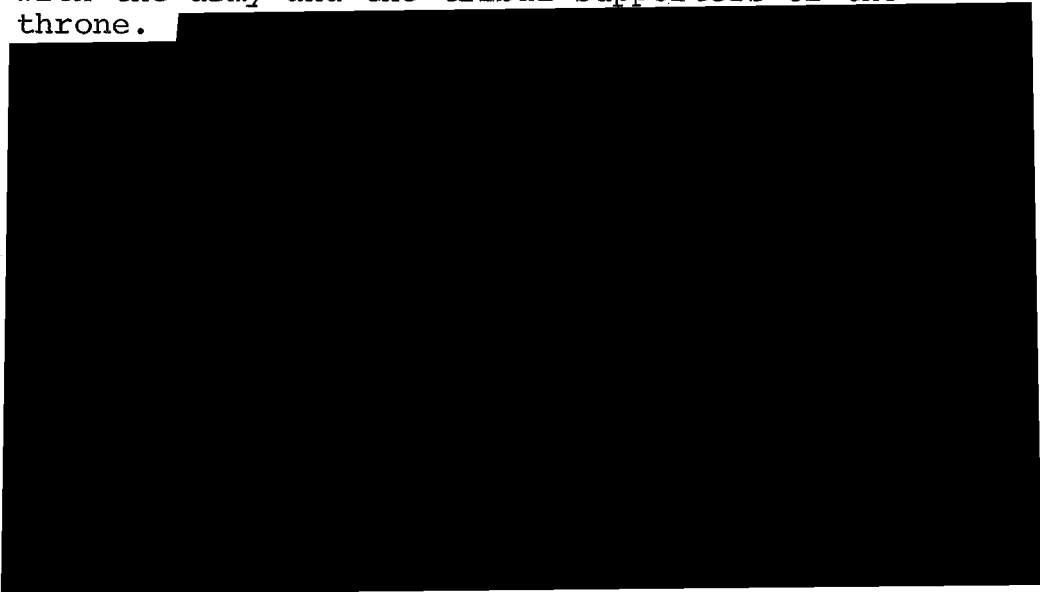
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lukewarm as well, Husayn has been in need of constant reassurances that US support and financial assistance will continue. In fact, he was on his way to Washington seeking such assurances and more aid when the Zarga mutiny broke out.

### Increasing Isolation

Husayn has drawn increasingly out of touch with the army and the tribal supporters of the throne.



Those in the palace and army who hoped that the Zarga mutiny would shake Rifai's hold over Husayn have been bitterly disappointed. Husayn refused to blame his prime minister or his chief of staff for the conditions underlying the mutiny. If anything, Rifai seems in a stronger position now than he was before the trouble, while the influence of his chief rival, Crown Prince Hassan, has continued to decline.

As if to emphasize this, Husayn went out of his way shortly after the mutiny to express his continued confidence in his prime minister and saw to it that Rifai received prominent local news coverage during Secretary Kissinger's visit to Amman in early March, eclipsing the Crown Prince.

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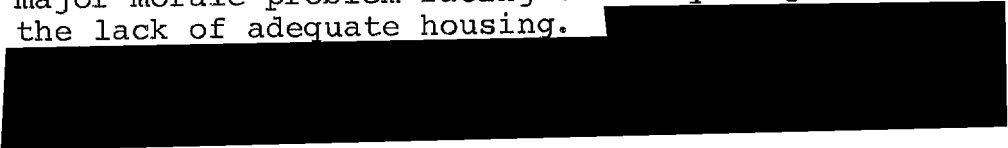
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The Army

Perhaps nothing suggests the current mood of apathy in the army better than the King's reception at the recent Army Day celebrations. Compared with the enthusiasm with which he was greeted by the troops a year ago, his welcome this time was little more than perfunctory.

Since Zarqa, King Husayn has taken several steps to improve conditions in the army. In addition to granting a pay raise immediately after the mutiny, he has tried to improve PX/commissary and medical services for enlisted men. He has ordered replacements for cheap, defective boots that were a cause of dissatisfaction. The King has also assumed the personal debts of noncommissioned officers as he did for senior officers before the mutiny. He has ordered Bin Shakir to give top priority to barracks construction; probably the major morale problem facing the army at present is the lack of adequate housing.



In spite of his avowed intention to spend more time with the troops, however, the King has seen little of them since Zarqa. Husayn has left the day-to-day running of the army largely in the hands of Bin Shakir, whose answer to the discontent has been to clamp the lid on dissent and to feed the troops heavier doses of discipline. Moreover, Bedouin officers and men, raised in a tradition of direct access to the tribal leader, remain frustrated by Bin Shakir's cold chain-of-command system and by the wall of Westernized officialdom around the King.

It is no wonder, then, that morale is low and the troops are apathetic--a situation Husayn seems unaware of or unwilling to recognize despite the fact that several hundred junior officers and enlisted men with technical skills have chosen to leave the army over the past few months for better paying jobs in the Persian Gulf states or Jordan's private sector.

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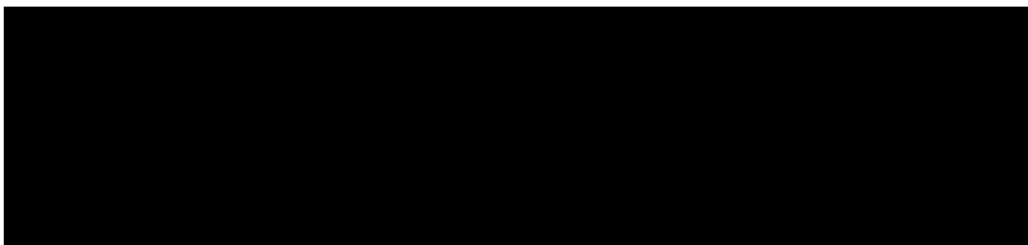
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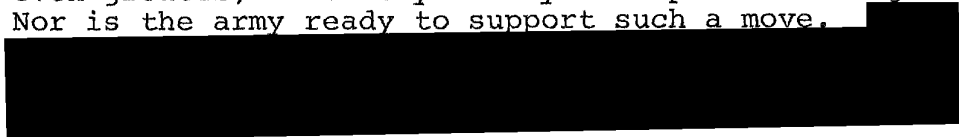
The Cloudy Future

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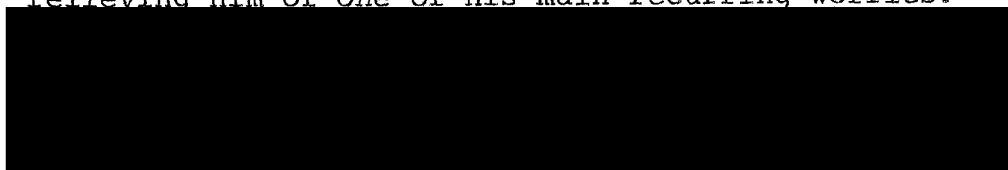


For all his problems, however, Husayn does not appear to be in any immediate political danger. One of the lessons of the Zarga mutiny would seem to be that his Bedouin army still chose to turn to the King to redress their grievances. Although the Crown Prince's standing with the army and tribes has increased since Zarga as Husayn's has continued its downward spiral, neither Hassan, nor his uncle Sharif Nasir, whose popularity seems even greater, is likely to try to depose the King. Nor is the army ready to support such a move.

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The Saudis' recent decision to help Jordan out financially has lightened the King's load, relieving him of one of his main recurring worries.



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